

## **Minutes – SOPN Board of Directors Meeting, via teleconference, May 24, 2004**

**Attending:** Maggie Johnston, Board Chair (Supt., CAVO), Steve Linderer, Board Member (Supt., FOLS), Mitzi Frank, Board Member (Supt., FOUN), Bruce Bingham, Board Member (IMR I+M Regional Coordinator), Paul Eubank, Board Member (Environmental Specialist, LAMR), Dusty Perkins, Board Member (Network Coordinator, SOPN), Heidi Sosinski (Data Manager, SOPN), Brian Carey, Network Coordinator's Supervisor (Chief of RM & VP, LYJO).

### **SOPN FY04 current progress**

- D. Perkins has been tracking and reviewing completed inventory reports and reviewing draft final reports as they come in. All I+M inventories with the exception of CHIC (Due May 31) have at least a draft final report completed. For the most part, the inventory reports have been quality work considering the funding level.
- S. Linderer: Brought up issue about how to handle not reaching the 90% inventory goal. Discussion: This is an issue across the network. There are several issues with this goal. The first is there are several methods to measure 90% completeness. The 90% goal may have been a lofty one and is one we will probably always be trying to achieve. We will have to prioritize our inventory goals and select the ones most crucial to our network. SOPN is not alone among I+M networks in not reaching the 90% goal.
- The webpage is now complete and will be continually updated. A section for posting items such as draft reports will be available in the near future.
- The NPSpecies MOA has been signed by all SOPN park superintendents designating H. Sosinski as Point-of-Contact for items regarding NPSpecies. She is also available to conduct NPSpecies and/or NatureBib training sessions (possibly at the annual board meeting.)
- The LYJO-SOPN administrative agreement was completed and signed.

### **Plan for spending remaining inventory dollars**

- D. Perkins presented a list of inventory needs that were developed from scoping meetings and reviewing the completed inventories. The list had three categories: highest priority; mid-level priority; and lowest priority.
- The plan was to present this list to the technical committee for addition/review/revision. We would then have a prioritized list of inventory needs which would be useful in setting up cooperative agreements with existing funds and looking for external sources of funding for other high

priority needs. The technical committee would also recommend which ones SOPN should set up this year.

- The BOD level of approval process of this list was discussed. **Action Item: It was decided to have the technical committee develop the prioritized list which would then be presented to the board of directors for approval via email.**
- SOPN currently has \$26,000 available for filling inventory needs. Additional funds from the vital signs budget can be used in future years to fill inventory gaps if the inventory will be a resource that has a high probability of being a vital sign. Additionally, we have \$10,000 at the University of Montana for inventory and monitoring needs, which would be best spent there to reduce additional overhead costs.
- M. Johnston - Question regarding exotic plant mapping at CHIC. Funds from NRPP could be available for exotic plant mapping. Discussion: List will consider possibilities of using non-I+M \$ to fill each need. It is useful to have a ready-to-go approved list that will be useful should we need to react quickly to an available fund source or researcher.
- B. Bingham: Issues regarding SAND: Potential for problems because it may not be counted in the official "270" parks in the I+M program. Several of SAND's inventories are on the SOPN high priority list. I+M may not want to spend inventory money on parks not in the 270 at this time. SOPN's pot of inventory money did not include SAND and was designated for the other 10 parks. We need to gauge WASO's reaction and competing priorities from other parks. If the BOD wants to move further with SAND, we could probably find a workable solution. SOPN is still in the early stages, so we may have some latitude. (Note and correction: D. Perkins thought SAND was officially added because SOPN has had extra \$ was added to the budget, however B. Carey checked after the meeting and the \$ D. Perkins was referring to was actually added due to the addition of FOLS). **Action Item: B. Bingham recommended that we wait to hear from Steve Fancy (National Monitoring Coordinator) before proceeding with SAND projects.**

#### **POST MEETING NOTE**

**-From B. Bingham through S. Fancy: I+M prefers to not spend current inventory money on parks that were not in the original "270" parks. The money we have received to date was for the original 10 parks, not SAND. At some point (not date determined) we will receive additional funds for inventories at SAND. If there is unused money from the original 10 parks, then money may be reallocated to SAND.**

**-From B. Bingham: Other networks have run into similar problems in that there were high priority inventories for new parks that were not part of the**

**“270”. At least one network went ahead and spent some of their original inventory/monitoring money on a new park.**

**-D. Perkins has discussed a revised plan with M. Johnston to get the critical SAND inventories that are necessary for vital signs development completed while leaving the majority of SAND inventories until additional money becomes available. This plan will be presented at to the Technical committee on July 12.**

### **Conceptual Models**

- D. Perkins plans to present the technical committee with a list of needed conceptual models and a plan for completing them. Currently have 6 possible models on the list. Two models in particular are shared by several parks (short/mixed grass prairie and prairie streams/riparian zones). A recommendation is to have the technical committee review/revise/approve the plan and decide which models to start developing. **Action Item: The approved plan will then be sent to the board of directors for approval via email.**
- The FY04 work plan designated \$10,000 for developing conceptual models in FY04. D. Perkins recommended pushing back the majority of conceptual model funding until FY05 and spend more FY04 money on inventories instead. SOPN would designate small amounts (\$1-2,000) for conceptual models in FY04 to set up the agreements and then fund the remainder in FY05. **Action Item: The board approved this change of timing and FY04 funding amount for conceptual models.**

### **POST MEETING NOTE**

**-In discussions between D. Perkins, B. Carey, and M. Johnston a revised inventory/conceptual model implementation plan has been developed. For FY05 SOPN is in the budget to receive full funding of \$389,000, however it is possible that SOPN could receive \$150,000 if the NPS budget is not approved. Due to budget timing constraints we may not know which amount we will receive until sometime in the Spring of 2005. If we did receive the full amount we would be responsible for completed conceptual models by October 2005. If we wait until we hear on the amount we will be on a very short time frame to complete these models. Therefore we are proposing to borrow money from the inventory funding budget to forward fund the development of two models beginning in FY04 for completion early in FY05. Once we receive full funding we will use some of the monitoring budget to conduct inventories. This general plan will be presented to the technical committee on July 12.**

### **Natural Resources Overview**

- A list of important natural resources and stressors has been compiled from the network. This list will be sent around to all the parks to rank the issues on a park level. Heidi is developing an access database to track the results of this survey. There are two reasons for doing this.
  - a. To allow parks interviewed early in the scoping process access to have a complete natural resource issue list. There may be an issue that was brought up at a later scoping visit that was not discussed at an early scoping session.
  - b. The survey will indicate issues that are important to each park and the network as a whole.

## **Annual Meeting**

A proposal for moving the annual meeting from October to August. Pros and cons were briefly discussed

### Pros:

- a. Allow BOD more time to provide comment on SOPN annual reports and work plans due to WASO November 1.
- b. Meeting can coincide with the SOPN+4 SEPAS meeting.
- c. Allow more flexibility on meeting location (Dusty's ability to travel will be restricted from September 15 to October 15).
- d. Would allow for a meeting to possibly occur in New Mexico or Colorado. More parks may be able to drive to the meeting.

### Cons

- a. SOPN would have to use FY04 funds (\$5,000) to pay for the meeting. This will cut into inventory funds
- b. +4 parks may have problems attending due to travel restrictions

**Action Item: The board approved moving the SOPN meeting to August to be held in Austin/San Antonio/Johnson City. The board also approved holding the SEPAS+4 meeting at the same time. SOPN will pay the travel for one member from each SOPN park to attend both meetings. Dusty will talk to Fran Pannebaker who is leading the SOPN+4 meeting and send out an email to all 15 parks and interested parties to try and get a date on the calendar.**

## **SOPN plans for the remainder of FY04**

- D. Perkins briefly discussed the budget worksheet detailing the budget status and plans for the remainder of FY04.
- M. Johnston: Suggested developing a review of the existing inventories that would list inventory accomplishments and determine where the holes were

in the existing inventories. Some of this work has been done while creating the inventory needs list, but we will discuss this topic at the annual meeting.

- How to reach the 90% goal was also discussed. SOPN will not be getting additional \$ to complete the inventories, as I+M money is shifting towards vital signs monitoring. The SOPN needs to decide which inventories are most crucial and how we should proceed in filling them.

#### **Preliminary agenda for next board meeting was presented**

- The idea to have a separate board and technical committee meeting was tabled as the SOPN Charter states that any member of the SOPN parks may attend a board meeting or a technical committee meeting. However, there may be times that the board might want to discuss sensitive issues as a board. One thought was to change the charter to allow for an executive session. Currently there are no issues that the board anticipates needing an executive session, but it may be useful to have in the charter. This option will be discussed further in August.